

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE D-18

NEW YORK TIMES
11 MARCH 1982

Reagan Secrecy Plan Assailed

WASHINGTON, March 10 (AP) — Critics of President Reagan's proposal to broaden the Government's power to classify documents as secret charged today that the plan amounted to giving Federal officials a "blank check" to hide mistakes and manage the news.

Representative Glenn English, an Oklahoma Democrat, chairman of the House Government Operations Subcommittee on Information, also chastised the Administration for refusing to send officials to Congress to explain the proposal.

"Virtually, every change has been in the direction of more secrecy," Mr. English said at a subcommittee hearing. "Now the Administration won't even appear to explain why it wants even more secrecy."

A draft executive order, which requires only Mr. Reagan's signature, would allow Government officials to in-

voke national security more easily in keeping information from the public. It would reverse a 30-year trend toward increased Government openness.

The Administration has given Congress copies of the proposed order and said any comments would be considered.

"The proposed order would foster a new torrent of overclassification," said Bob Schieffer, a CBS News correspondent representing Sigma Delta Chi, the Society of Professional Journalists. "The public does not need a new way for the Government to hide or compound its mistakes under the banner of national security."

Mary M. Cheh, a law professor at George Washington University in Washington, said secrecy permitted the Government to manipulate the news.